4: Maquet E-5 (1950-1951) 1954 FO42 Rundi FO42

564 Three socio-racial castes are to be
563 distinguished among its peoples: pastoralist Batutsi[1] (about 10 per cent. of
162 the population), agriculturalist Bahutu (about 85 per cent.), and Batwa, hunters and potters (about 5 per cent.).

Man and the Material World

773 The world in which men are placed and which they know through their
776 senses was created *ex nihilo* by *Imana*. The Ruanda word *kurema* means to produce, to make. It is here rendered 'to create' because our informants say that there was nothing before *Imana* made the world. This belief concerning the origin of the material world is universal and clear. To any question on this point, the answer is ready.

772 The Banyarwanda assert that we do not see the whole of the material
● [823] world which was created at that time. The world of our experience is flat; its limits are far away and made of fences like the ones we see around kraals. On these fences there is a big rock which is the sky we see. Beyond the rock there is another world (*ijuru*) similar to our own, with hills, trees, and rivers. This world may be said to be heavenly only in the sense that it is above the sky: it is not a paradise but rather a richer duplicate of our world. Under the soil on which we tread there is yet another world (*ikuzimu*) also conceived as similar to our own. There is nothing infernal about it. The material universe is thus a kind of three-storied construction. It is not impossible to go from one floor to another: some people and animals came from the world above to the intermediate world and, according to some legends, one man at least went to the lower world.

821 In our world the moon and the stars (which are kinds of glow-worms) stay high up in the sky. The sun rises in the morning and in the evening reaches the end of the world where a powerful man kills it and cuts it into pieces. Then he throws the main bone across the vault of heaven to the East where it grows up and the following morning the same process begins again.

773 In essentials our world was created as we see it now, but there have been
[823] some changes in the course of its history. Some hills were raised up by the kings of Ruanda; the formation of Kivu Lake is accounted for in different folk-tales. Cattle, which rank so high in the Ruanda scale of values, also made a special appearance on the intermediate world. The stories give more than one version of their origin but they agree on their arrival in a world already constituted and inhabited by men. According to some tales, creatures did not originally have the same bodily form as they have now. It is said, for instance, that horns were given to animals after they had been created.

[825]

772 This, and a belief that the world is now slowly degenerating, getting old (people's stature is decreasing, cows give less milk), suggest that the Ruanda conception of the universe is not a wholly static one. The world does not remain the same, it is in process of evolution. However, when direct

[1] In this paper, following the common use, we have kept the prefixes of the Ruanda words, such as *mu* for the singular and *ba* for the plural.

133 Then there are in order of size: Mohazi in the Buganza, Mugessera and Sake in the Gissaka, Ruhondo (at an altitude of 1, 750 meters) and Bolero (at 1, 065 meters) in Mulera, and Karago in Lwankeri plain.

In the Bugessera there are several ponds: Murago, Mirayi, Kagomasi, Chohoha, Gaharwa, Kilimbi, etc. The small land of Bgiriri, which is adjacent to Gissaka toward the south, includes Birira /pond/.

The two rivers that wind through Ruanda are: the Nyabarongo /Nyawarongo/ (1) and the Akanyaru (2). The former, to which

[103] 1. Nyabarongo, from the verb kulongora, kulongoroka, "to go far away." This river was called thus because it flows throughout Ruanda.

[103] 2. Akanyaru, from the verb kunyaruka, "to rush." The speed of its flow gave rise to this name.

Mr. Kandt, the last German resident, gave the name of Caput Nili ("Source of the Nile") in a well-known book, is formed by the junction of two rivers, the Mwogo (3) and the Lukarara.

[823] 3. The violence of its flow and the volume of its waters during the rainy season occasion numerous tragic accidents, hence the expression: "Mwogo! Thou doth not kill men, thou only taketh away those who come (of their own accord) to meet death," Mwogo! ntiwich' abantu, wicha abakwizaniye.

[539]

671 theft, arson, and destruction of crops caused to a neighbor, grazing rights, the levying of taille /head tax/ and forced labor, etc. Culprits [696] of high lineage and wealthy people often extricated themselves with money and innocent people sometimes payed for offenders, especially when false witnesses were suborned.

The Pit of the Bugessera

133 Among the various torture spots such as the swamp, called ● 823 Nkonde in the Buberuka, the Nshimbo swamp near Lukaza, the 681 Ruboneye swamp near Nyanza, the place called "Ficus-tree spot" 696 (ku Kivumu), certain rapids of the Akanyaru and Nyabarongo rivers, etc., it was the pit of the Bugessera that left the most evil memory. Its reputation is highly sinister, owing to the illustrious offenders who were tossed into it and also to the legends that circulate about this accursed place.

The pit is located in the Bugessera region, not far from one of Lwabugiri's ancient residences, which it is surprising to find in the middle of this deserted region.

The landscape is stark, even wild, and darkened by the memory of the tragic executions it witnessed. /382/

681 The pit is a sort of depression in a rocky area (ibuye ryasamye), 696 about three or four meters deep. It is more or less filled with stagnant 823 rain water according to the time of year, and it is half choked with mud (1). Clumps of trees of various kinds make islets of greenery and

1. The Blacks like to account for the peculiarities of rocks and boulders, whose shapes and cavities invite comparisons. They tend to attribute these formations to the influence of men or demigods. They gave the name of "Bayanga's little beer boat" (umuvule) to another depression located near the preceding one and which to their eyes had that appearance. All around

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the "little boat" there are cavities or small holes upon which the Mututsi Bayanga, according to the same tradition, placed the beer jars (ibiteleko by' ibibindi by' inzoga).

The torture spots sometimes borrowed their name from the first victim to be sacrificed there, such as Nkonde, Ruboneye, Nshimbo, etc.

break the monotony of that vast plain on which only herders and hunters roam.

Tradition adds that a Mututsi formerly lived not far from the pit and led his herds to water there.

His name, Bayanga, remained bound to the spot (urwobo rwa Bayanga). Cursed by some king whose name is now forgotten, the place was later deserted.

It seems, however, that the pit was not put to its new and tragic use until the reign of King Lwabugiri, who settled with his court in the middle of the Bugessera waste around 1886 or 1889 in order to be closer to the Urundi he hoped to conquer. The presence and proximity of the pit probably suggested to him the idea of tossing criminals and convicted political offenders into it. It was a short step from thought to deed. The first victims, at least those whose name has been preserved, date from the time of Lwabugiri's reign.

Since this is a remote place that inspires terror, it is known only to the executioners and to the few inhabitants of the Bugessera. Fancy took charge of this cursed place and wove fantastic tales about it which are naïvely believed by the populace. /383/

It is said that anyone who drinks of the water will die instantly. Even to wash one's hands in it or merely touch it would have the same result. It is said that a hunter who was a stranger to the land and who quenched his thirst at the pit contracted leprosy on the spot and died after horrible sufferings. This same water is said to be fatal

681 to birds and animals such as buffalo, gazelles, wild boars, dogs.
696 Even if the latter should not die immediately, their masters would
● 823 have to kill them for fear of being stricken themselves by contagion.

Each night, they say, smoke and flames rise from that awful place and cast a reddish glare on the horizon (1).

1. The grass fires at the end of summer must not be foreign to this association of thoughts and images.

It is also said that the waters have the color of blood (atukura, assa n'amarasso). Every time an offender is led to the pit, the waters rise suddenly as though to fetch the victim (ngw' abon' umugome, akassama). After swallowing their prey, the waters subside. Then protracted cries and moans (akaboroga, akater' induru) arise from the bottom of the pit.

The pit is so deep, it is commonly said, that its waters join those of Lake Kivu (ngw' aja hasi, afatanye n'i Kivu).

Considering such stories, one can easily understand why people should speak with terror of that cursed place.

In actual fact, the victims were strangled or killed with spears
681 before they were thrown into the water.
696 An attempt was made to submerge the bodies, but they would rise once more to the surface. The hyenas quickly disposed of them. After leaving the place of torture, the executioners would go a certain distance to another depression, usually filled with water, in order to clean their weapons and wash their blood-stained hands. /384/

[848] Traitors and enemies, bewitchers and ranking political
[845] prisoners were not the sole victims of the accursed pit. Among those condemned to die at that sinister spot were also freak babies (ibimara),
[847] unwed mothers (ibinyandaro), children born during the period of mourning held for their father (inda y'amabi) sometimes along with
[826] their mother, young girls whose breasts had not grown (impenebere) (1). . . , and calves born in a "faulty" manner (ubufuti), such as those whose legs . . came first.

643 There must have been few kings who benevolently left this life of their own accord.

Popular belief has accepted too many fables on the subject. It was still said recently that Queen Mother Nyiramavugo, a grandmother of King Lwabugiri who must have died around 1860, was the first to refuse the poison when old age drew near in spite of the dictates of custom and tradition. "Since that day, " say the common people, "the Abiru, or keepers of the customs, who are in charge of this task and duty have not dared mention it anymore to kings and queens. "

2. The Corpse of the Royal Dead is "Smoked"

766 "When a king died, " the same people go on, "two Batutsi
643 from important families were seized and killed forthwith near the body. " This was called "to make the king's pillow" (gusegurir' umwami). Those men were given to him to accompany and serve him in the spirit world.

[641] A subject counts for nothing while the king is all important. It is proper, therefore, to send him at least two men chosen from the highest social stratum.

"They did not dare observe this rite, " add the narrators, "at the death of the last king, Lwabugiri (in 1895). " /517/

When a queen mother died, two great ladies of the same (Mututsi) /Batutsi/ race were sacrificed. It is the Banyamugogo, or [767] "men with the big (mourning) log, " who are in charge of funeral ceremonies. They make up the royal corporation of undertakers, although their name does not indicate this outright. They are called "men with the big (mourning) log, " owing to the custom which demands that a wooden log be burned for three or four days after the [824] death of an individual. For this purpose, one deliberately chooses a green log of red-bloom erythrina (umuko), a symbolic tree that recalls the death of Ryangombe, the alleged founder of the famous secret society of initiates (imandwa).

The body of the dead king is transported from his last home, [823] which will henceforth be called Gisozi ("Big hill") (1), to one of the

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1. This expression "big hill" is readily understood by the natives, because it serves to designate the spot where a reigning monarch drew his last breath.

sacred groves (2) reserved for royal tombs by custom or tradition.

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2. We owe the reader an explanation of the expression "sacred grove, " which will recur frequently. The word "sacred" is taken here in a broad and technical sense to mean that these groves are set aside and closed to laymen, who may not enter them. They are guarded by official watchmen, who see to it that the grounds are properly respected.

The Banyamugogo, who become the temporary masters of the area, have a large hut built and enlist for its construction the services of neighboring people.

There the remains of the sovereign are sheltered and laid upon a grid in the middle of the hut, about 1. 50 meters above ground. The members of the corporation keep a fire burning under the grid for several days in order to dry out the corpse and prevent it from putrefying.

The body, which lies on a bed of skins, is constantly moved so that the heat from the fire may reach all its parts. /518/

The keepers of the hut take turns without interruption, day and night, by the fire they must maintain. Meanwhile, no layman may come near the place under penalty of death.

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The undertakers keep up their work until, according to popular belief, the corpse gives birth to a leopard, which is at first

769 The bazimu, the spirits of the dead, are feared. They are not good. They are responsible for the misfortunes and torments that plague one. In Mulera, at any rate, this may be related to the well-known unfortunate position of old men.

Every father of a family offers sacrifices to his ancestors and his deceased relatives in the ndaro, the small grass huts near his compound and the place where the spirits dwell. Ndaro means "sleeping place," "resting place," and, according to Father Buisson, is derived from the verb kurara "to sleep." I should like to point out, however, the similarity between this word and ndako which in the Bangala and Ababua [Babua] dialects simply means "house." Sacrifices are also made in the sacred niche of every hut.

782 769 For sacrifices to the manes, a fire is built in front of the huts and around it sticks are placed in the ground, to which are fastened small bits of meat, lumps of umutsima, etc. Small vessels (imperezo) of beer are also set out. These offerings are taken from the meat and umutsima (stiff millet mush) which the sacrificer brought with him. The rest he eats himself.

[299] Offerings are also placed inside the huts. Frequently the more valuable offerings are only temporarily exposed. Later they are eaten by the family of the sacrificer. This is said to be the case when, in accordance with custom, the foreleg of a slain animal is offered for a deceased girl. This is not always true, however, for I repeatedly saw rotting forelegs of goats hanging in the ndaro. "To offer to the spirits" is called kutonora bazimu. To the spirits of one's parents the ribs and entrails of slain animals are usually offered.

[415]

775 ●823 Fig. 162. Sacrificial Vessel for Beer, Mulera. (1/4 actual size. III E13096. 8 centimeters high.)

Underworld. Not all the spirits of the dead remain in the vicinity of their ndaro to be taken care of by their families and to lead a peaceful existence. Many spirits, after death, live in the volcanoes, and the activity of these fire mountains is connected with them.

According to the Balera, Ryangombe is said to live in Muhawura with the souls of those who were dedicated to him in life. They constitute his court and his retinue.

At the court of Ryangombe there are not infrequently angry disputes among his retinue. Then they usually throw stones, and

775 sometimes large quantities of these reach the outside world. I
●823 repeatedly heard this explanation of volcanic activity. It sometimes happens, however, that Ryangombe drives spirits into the outer world as a punishment. Then they torment the living, who must make sacrifices so that Ryangombe will take the spirits back and thus free the living from molestation by these homeless.

[103] People from the region of Bobandana, whom I met on the way to Rutshuru, called Mount Nyiragongo Kilima ya Mungu, "Mountain of the Gods."

Lieutenant Von Parisch (1) also says that Ryangombe allegedly

1. Parisch, F.R. Von, "Zwei Reisen durch Ruanda 1902-1903 [Two Journeys through Ruanda 1902-03]," Globus, Vol. 86 (1904), p. 78.

lived in Muhawura with his court which consists of the souls of the babandwa dedicated to him. Only the souls of the nsigo, that is, the profane and those initiated into other cults, go to Nyiragongo after death. However, he concedes that, according to other accounts, Ryangombe lives in Nyiragongo.

The volcanoes play a very important role in the supernatural world of Ruanda. Captain Von Beringe (2) mentions that the birunga

2. Beringe, Captain Von, a report on his journeys in the region of the Kirunga volcanoes, Mitteilungen aus den Deutschen Schutzgebieten 1901, pp. 36, 37.

(plural of kirunga, "volcano") are named after the spirits which are said to live in them, such as Sabinio, Karisimbi, Mikeno, Nyamlagira, and Gonga. The last is the oldest among them. Formerly Nyamlagira, who was later exiled, was said to have lived with him. The later event is perhaps an allusion to the recent origin of the youngest volcano in this group.

[532] [300] Memorial Trees. There are no pictorial representations of the dead in Ruanda. I saw no sculpture or wood carvings that referred to them.